

First Generation True Armyworm in Corn, Small Grains and Pasture

Adapted from articles by Eileen Cullen, Entomologist UW Madison and Marlin Rice, Entomologist ISU Ames.



Armyworm larvae are brownish green, hairless, and have alternate dark and light stripes down their backs. There are six larval instars, reaching approximately 1½ to 2-inches when full grown. After larvae reach approximately 1½-inch, they are nearly full grown and will stop feeding and pupate. Therefore control recommendations are based not only on the number of larvae but also their size. Smaller larvae will continue to feed for a longer time. Armyworm economic thresholds for corn (gathered from several areas in the field, checking 5 sets of 20 plants) are 2 or more armyworms at ¾-inch length or smaller per plant on 25% of the plants, OR, 1 armyworm at ¾-inch or smaller per plant on 75% of the plants.

Grasses and small grains are the preferred egg-laying sites for female moths. The greenish white eggs are laid in rows or clusters on leaves. One week to 10 days after the eggs are laid, larvae begin to emerge and feed. After 3 to 4 weeks, full grown larvae pupate for 2 weeks and emerge as adults. There are 3 generations per season, each generation lasting approximately 5 to 6 weeks. The success of the current first generation will set the stage for 2nd generation later in July. Second generation is typically the larger population and potentially most damaging. The 3rd fall generation is typically not injurious and is often heavily parasitized by beneficial insects, fungi and viruses.

For 1st generation true armyworm, corn fields with crop residue, weeds or dead grass should be watched closely. Presence of grass weeds in corn fields will attract moths for egg-laying. No-till corn fields may be particularly suited for egg-laying if soil is covered with crop residue, weeds, grass. Corn fields preceded by a winter rye crop may also attract female moths. As small grains are cut or grass weed hosts dry down, armyworm larvae can move quickly to corn. This can happen following herbicide burn down in no-till or conventional till fields.

Larvae tend to feed at night or on cloudy days and hide in soil or under foliage during the day. Leaf feeding begins from the outer leaf margins, inward toward the leaf midrib – giving corn leaves a ragged appearance. In wheat and pasture grasses, examine the soil between two rows at several points in the field and determine the number of larvae per square foot, populations at 3 larvae per square foot may justify treatment.

Common Insecticides Labeled for Armyworms.

Insecticide	Rate per Acre (Low and High Rates)
Ambush 2E*	6.4-12.8 ounces
Asana XL*	5.8-9.6 ounces
Lorsban 4E	1-2 pints
Mustang	3.4-4.3 ounces
PennCap-M*	2-3 pints
Pounce 3.2EC*	4-8 ounces
Sevin XLR+	2-4 pints
Warrior 1E or T*	2.56-3.84 ounces

Follow label directions. *Restricted use pesticide.



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